

1237
A
R E V I E W
O F
Ecclesiastick Patronages.
As they are here established by Law;
AND OF THE
C O N D U C T
O F T H E
Opposing Clergy.



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To the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Reverend and Honourable,

IT is yours to mend the *World*, to destroy with one Word all seditious *Factions* in the Church, and bring *Men* to unanimity, charity and peace with each other; it is yours to show the orderly principles of this church, and that nothing can warrand disobedience to and contempt of *Laws*, except that the sovereign be forcing the subject to something discharged by our holy religion, contrary to the sacred scriptures and repugnant to the well informed consciences of all good men. To your judgment then I submit this little pamphlet, nor can I pass from informing your honours, that all good countrymen and well meaning christians expect from so learned a meeting your dissatisfaction shoven to those who factiously combine, to disregard the present established laws, and contemn our sovereign acting conform to law. How presuming so ever ye may think it in any to speak so, matters are now come to that height, that ye seem by circumstances to be constrained to give your arret one way or other. To disappoint the will of the legislators in this ancient patronages will but irritate them the more, and incite

them to conceive the law in more peremptory terms; also it is unbecoming such an assembly to use these mean arts which so easily can be enervated.

It is alledged that the King knows nothing of this matter, that it is entirely carried on by some persons of quality who have the Ear of the prime minister of state. What it is but a most odious reflection upon his majesty, that he hath never taken the pains to inform himself of what breeds such a discontent in the minds of some of his subjects in North-Britain? Is there no body who have such a dislike at the present ministry, as to take the trouble to acquaint his majesty of this? Suppose for a while it were so, doth not the King act in every case by his ministers? Is not the ministry there acting conform to law, by the King's authority and in his name, his majesty's own deed? In what other way does the King act at all? Any argument founded upon this would warrant despising the King's seal or sign manual in every case.

Reverend and Honourable,

I hope ye will excuse this my rudeness upon account of my good views, and allow me to be a good friend to religion as well as,

your most humble servant,

Philopresbyterus.





A REVIEW of Ecclesiastick Patronages, as they are here established by Law, &c.



EVERY Man, who hath any Concern about Religion or his Country, must feel lively Compunctions of Grief in his Breast, when he sees Contention about Trifles, rendering Religion, the best Gift of Heaven, the Source of an infinite Number of Michiefs to Society; and thereby affording to her Adversaries an Argument against her almost unexceptionable. What Emotions must seize him, when observing this to be brought forth, nursed strenuously, supported and spread by the Clergy, a Society of Men designed for the advancing of Religion? Whose Passion will not be warmed, when those, who by their very Institution, ought to be the Propagators, meek Supporters, and best Friends of Christianity, thus turn her most successful Cut-throats.

When an honest man sees the true and most sublime religion in this manner mangled, and the contest carried to that height, as to enrage the people against their sovereign, sow the seeds of a

civil war, and give the government ground to look upon his countrymen, as shortly to be rebels; thus creating mutual distrusts between the crown and the subject, the dismal consequences of which are too well known, and before now felt in this island; What is the duty of every good christian, and honest countryman in this case? Is he to stand tamely looking on, while the gentlemen of the black cloath are working the country up to this ferment? Or, ought he, as much as in him lies, to expose the practices of these restless churchmen in their due light, and quiet the minds of his fellow subjects? Is he not obliged, for the honour of truth and interest of religion, to propale to all mankind, that the miseries, with which the country are upon such an account as this, har- rassed, do not naturally spring from a religion, in its own nature so full of peace and love, as the christian is; but from the wilful humours of some popular clergymen, obstinately pushed in open contradiction to christianity, out of blind ignorance, or hellish rage against religion; and that these wicked, or ignorant preachers most ground- lessly father upon religion these their wild notions, which never had their birth any where, but in their own brains?

This is our most lamentable case in *North Britain*, and unto it we are thrown, by those who pretend the act of parliament, restoring to patrons of churches the right of presentation, is oppressive, doth subvert the reformation; and therefore ought not in conscience to be obeyed; not only so, but that those who maintain this, are alone the true servants of God. This condi-
tion

tion calls for remedy from all men, and yet no man hath done any thing towards it.

I the more readily throw in my mite, because the discreet and regular clergy dare not undertake to say one word in this dispute.

The law complained of impowers the king, or other proper patron, to present, within six months after a vacancy or erection, to the cure, one out of those who by the clergy are declared fit for being pastors. Every person seems to be convinced of the reasonableness of presentation, when a private person builds and endows a church, out of his own patrimony ; Is not this the very case with the parliament ? Have not they built and endowed all the churches in *Scotland*, which are not built and endowed by donation from private families ? And even in the last case, was it not the parliament, which gives strength to the will of the donor, and makes the donation effectual for that purpose ? I mean an act of parliament hath done all this. Is it not an act of parliament, which forces the contributions to be paid, by the neighbouring heritors, for maintaining ministers, building churches, where they are necessary, and repairing those already built ? Is it unreasonable then, that the king, commissioned by the parliament, or other proper patron, should have the power of presentation, in terms of the laws above named ? Nothing else is by these grievous laws statuted. What hurt can the reformation receive from patronages thus established, when none can be presented but one, who hath already declared his sentiments to be the same with the tenets in the *Westminster* Confession of Faith, and who hath by Presbyterian ministers been approved of, as found,

found, that is, fit to teach the christian religion,
 as it relates to matters of faith, or matters of
 practice; This law doth force upon the clergy
 none, who are of different sentiments from them-
 selves, or against whom any personal objection
 may ly with respect to their morals: What inju-
 ry then can the Presbyterian interest suffer by it?
 Nor can churches be kept vacant, at the will of
 their patrons, longer then six months; Who will
 oppose such a law as this, but one who is either
 very foolish, or designs to pursue an interest se-
 parate from religion, in a hypocritical way, under
 the covert of religion? Who but some such per-
 son will affirm this law, which in no ways hurts
 christianity, to be virtually contrary to holy
 scripture, and never once produce one text, which
 doth so much as look that way? Are we to be-
 lieve upon any man's word, that the scriptures
 will bind up the hands of sovereigns in such a
 case as this? Upon the account of this law, the
 government is cried out against, as usurping the
 prerogative royal of Jesus Christ: In all publick
 meetings for the worship of God, these laws are
 prayed against, in such a manner, as to declare
 all those who submit to it, enemies to Christ, and
 thereby expose peoples lives, much wiser by far,
 than these inconsiderate preachers, to the fury of
 an enraged rabble, not without undue reflections
 upon his majesty; and how well they have suc-
 ceeded in convincing blind zealots, to rise in
 mobs, to the risking their own lives, and manifest
 danger of other folks also, is too apparent;
 yea, their discourse have this effect, that their ig-
 norant adorers seem, by their means, to think it
 laudable to kill any of the opposite ministers; yet
 still

still the *Faithful Ministers*, as they stile themselves, go on in the same course.

Were it not their design to spirit up mobs in this manner, would they not desist from such unwary expressions in their prayers and preachings as are found to have that effect? This looks suspicious. If they be not calling for the aid of the devout crowds, what can be proposed by complaining to them? If they cannot in conscience submit to these laws, there is a toleration act subsisting, let them separate from the established church; but then they must keep their opinions quietly, and not cudgel a government to be of their mind. But perhaps they cannot think of parting with the church revenues. I shall not desire them; I am only pointing out a way how they may enjoy their consciences without embroiling the whole nation in their quarrel and raising a rebellion. Although they pretend these laws to be the cause of their uneasiness, they have never taken the trouble to lay before the parliament this their grievance; if they aimed at the removal of these laws, in a manner consonant to the order of society, one would expect never a session of parliament without petitions and representations upon that subject. But the truth of the matter is, they cannot dress it in any shape, so as to appear grievous; or, if they can, it is below them to do it otherwise than in a tumultuous way.

In fine, the whole of their conduct in this point is opposite to the gospel rules. The gospel enjoins meekness of behaviour in every incident of life, and charity to those who differ in opinion from us; the complaining ministers act from mo-

tives quite different in this dispute, and give occasion to their deceived hearers to say to every body else, *Stand by I am holier than thee.* Do not the apostles discharge the weak and ignorant to be admitted to doubtful disputations? Supposing the laws to be unjust, their conduct is unjustifiable, therefore I appeal to my countrymen, let them judge which of us are in the right, I for desiring them not to be moved or disquieted about these outcries, or the raisers of these disturbances in the teeth of a law, which is in no sort noxious to religion. At the same time it is fit for these ministers to consider what an affront they offer to God by giving out their own opinions under the colour of God's commands, and pursuing their own interests by falsely calling them God's interest; and, I hope, nay, I am confident, that they are thus subservient to the cause of irreligion, by affording fund of ridicule to the vicious, more out of ignorance than design. But I beg to be allowed to inform how such men argue to prove the present controversy is maintained out of interest and ill design. Upon this they form a judgment of all ministers, believing every thing they say to be false, because in some things they see through the juggle; this is the inevitable consequence of the clergy their mixing the doctrines of men with the commandments of God, how cautious then ought they all to be in this point? When the clergy have once wrested the power of selecting probationers to cures from the crown, under pretence of giving it to the people, they will then assume it to themselves, that they being thus less dependent upon the civil power, may get themselves at length placed above law: And what
nakes

makes this the more credible is, that there is no agreement yet made among yourselves, where this power truly doth reside: But if the churchmen spoke out for themselves, they would not animate the mob, because people are generally little touched with the thing in which they have no interest; thus, they say, the deceit is carried on, so having once found the clergy practising upon the unwary and ignorant; who can believe what fraudulent imposers say? Then down goes religion.

But is all this bustle about the prerogatives of the clergy? It is more like good christians to lay it down than contend. Is it the peoples? Use your interest with them to throw it away, and I'll warrant ye will succeed, for we all see, that without your stickling for it, the christian people would not make half the noise about it; this would be more like the messengers of peace, to heal differences than to widen them. But it may be reply'd, how can those ministers be of any use whom the people will not hear, and who are brought in contrary to the people's approbation and liking? Who first persuaded the people that their call is the call of God? And that he who wants this, is not the gardner, but a thief or a robber; who enters Christ's orchard not to cultivate but to destroy? Are not such answerable for all these bad consequences? If the people were told from the same hand that the case was otherwise, their former belief would soon vanish; so it is still in your power to help it. Will ye not unanimously join to restore peace to your country, when this may be done only by telling truth? Will ye continue to expose religion to the ridicule
of

of bad men, and yourselves to the hatred of all, by supporting and heading the mob, ready upon all occasions to catch at any thing to condemn their superiors for? Do ye not know that this dispute hath made enemies of the nearest friends? That it ministers fuel for debates in conversation which hath frequently ended in warm animosities? Will they who ought to persuade us, when disagreeing, to amity, help to inflame our passions and encrease each dispute?

But, Gentlemen, are ye serious when ye affirm the call of the crowd to be a divine call? Are plowmen, who have had no education, able to make a right judgment upon the discourses of two or three young gentlemen who have spent the prime of their years at the university, and from thence infallibly determine who is the fittest for them, or who is God's choice? Do every head of family, as the phrase is, understand theology so well, as to be able to judge yourselves? Why then pray for what use are ye? If ye put this once in the thoughts of the members of parliament, it may be fatal not only to yourselves, but to all the clergy through the nation.

Raillery aside, the court, nobility and gentry will, we are sure, manage their powers discreetly. The patrons ordinarily consult with the heritors, gentlemen, who for the most part have had university education, or are taught the rules of politeness, and by their frequent conversation with men of learning know a great deal more, so must be allowed to be able to make a better choice, than country clowns.

In what case would ye leave all country gentlemen, when their tenants, yea their servants, who
all

all came in to the parish at their will, and can at their option, at the end of their lease or next term be again sent out of it; that they, I say, should prescribe to the heritors whom they are to hear long after these electors are removed? Yea by this scheme people may put a minister upon the perpetual residents in a parish when they are not to hear him two Sundays. What absurdity is it to call a pastor so chosen, more peculiarly the choice of Heaven, than if a patron had named him?

To give the Disposal of Churches to Crowds, will again introduce Whinning and Canting to please a Rable, and will turn all Order topsy turvy.

I know all who oppose Patronages, do not run into this Wildness, but I would have them consider in what Company they are. I will also lay before such, that there is no established Order yet agreed upon by the Clergy, that the rabbling Way generally did prevail, and that upon the present footing, it is a great deal nigher their Design, than when Settlements were in the Hands of an unruly Multitude: How can they blame the Government for establishing a settled Order, when Church men could agree upon none, an Order which hurts Religion in none of its Branches.

This I hope will work upon them so much, as to make them Calm in the Question, whether Laws are to be opposed by Church-men, whose Establishment depends upon Laws, for every trivial Account? Or whether there be any Ground at all for Opposition in this Dispute, since the Law quarrelled neither overturns Presbytery, nor

nor alters any other Article in the Church of Scotland her *Confession of Faith*.

Will the Government allow the Laws to be Counter-acted in open Defiance to the Parliament's Authority? If Presbytery once be placed in Opposition to the civil Power, what must be the Consequence? No prudent Friend to Presbytery will advise to trample upon the Sovereignty upon so slight Grounds.

I expostulate thus much with the Ministers, because they first broached the factious Principle, instilled it into the Minds of the People, and are the only Persons who keep it up.

The Parliament by this Law only points out who shall enjoy the publick Funds and preach in Churches, *i. e.* Publick Edifices; who will Dispute these to be at the Disposal of the Parliament? There is no Law forcing any Person to submit to, or acknowledge one of these Ministers thus settled for his Pastor; on the contrary, any Society of Persons are protected by Law to lay out Funds of their own for maintaining such Preachers as they chuse; but how unreasonable is it in them to demand the Parliament's Funds and the Parliament-houses? Since all the Subjects are left at Liberty to chuse their own Pastors, and endow them as they please, it is but just, that the Parliament be allowed the same Privilege.

This I offer to my Country Men, begging them to disregard the clamour of these hot headed Zealots, who go about, pretending that the Government is setting up any Tyranny over the Consciences of the Subject, upon Account of a Law which in no manner of Way touches Christianity, and set-

setting up a Scheme in Opposition to this, for which they can shew no Precedent in any lawfully established Church, from the first Foundations of Christianity, a Scheme warranted no where by Scripture, and contrary to common Sense, I mean the popular Calls.

POSTSCRIPT.

A Polite Author, writing in Defence of Christianity says: ' I challenge the Body corporate of Infidels to shew their Countrey-men upon what Foundations we may possibly be made better Friends, Neighbours, Subjects, Country Men, or any of the Relations or Friendships of humane Life, than upon the real Scheme of the Gospel.'

A Sett of Gentlemen of the Church of *Scotland* seem on Purpose to afford Answer to this Challenge, to be making Christianity a Tool to sow Discord among Friends and Neighbours, seditious Thoughts in the Minds of the Subject against the Sovereign, and to throw down before it all the friendships and relations of humane life.

' The temper of a religion is, he says, an argument for or against it; so that if Christianity be of a morose, harsh, reserved, superstitious, cruel cast, these are such ill favoured qualities, that mankind had better be without, than have a religion only to darken and cloud all the enjoyments of life. Who can be more morose than one, who will not part with an ace of his will to keep peace in society? Who can be more harsh, than he who condemns all others, as in the interests of the devil, who differ from him in the least article? Who
more

more superstitious than such an one? Who more cruel than this person, when he believes it to be good service to God, to cut off those who are of a different turn of thought? An arrant papist cannot be worse. Most of these who distinguish themselves in the present controversy against the government, are bent to this inhumane disposition. For shame, that such a faction should be animated by the preachers of peace, love and charity! Do ye not know that Deism is spreading all over this island? Great numbers are every day made converts to infidelity, will ye furnish them with better arguments than ever they had before?

F I N I S.

